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New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Louis Michel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Some 50 years ago my predecessor Paul-Henri Spaak said before the Assembly, in a phrase that stands out in our minds, "We are afraid". At that time, totalitarianism threatened democratic freedoms and our open society was in danger. Fortunately, political and diplomatic dialogue gradually won out over confrontation, mutual threats and force. The advent of a freer world, more united and more respectful of everyone is finally within our grasp. After September 2001, all democratic forces throughout the world felt a moment of fear, terror, confusion and horror at the barbaric violence that smashed their strongest beliefs into pieces. That irrational hatred threatened the same democratic values, fundamental freedoms and humanistic world outlook.

The free world came together with a sense of solidarity, compassion and survival. A coalition against that vile crime stood side by side with the people of the United States. We felt it was our duty; we felt that their suffering was our suffering and that their cause was also our cause. We could not permit there to be any doubt in the minds of the enemies of our shared values; we could not leave any scope for those who sought to break the promise of a world of justice, progress and peace.

Today we must move beyond fear. Our response must be guided by clear-minded analysis and rational action. The enemy is faceless but is not everywhere. We all are now constantly vigilant, but must not reach the point of being unable to look one another in the eye without mistrust or suspicion. We are in an infinitely great majority; only an infinitesimal minority is against us. We cannot simply reduce the entire world to a battlefield. We cannot simply make a division between good and evil. To build a wall would be to fall into the trap of those who openly display their hate and intolerance. Instead, more than ever we must realize that the source of wealth and hope in the world is precisely its great diversity and pluralism.

The struggle against terrorism must, of course, be based on effective methods with no room for laxity. I want to make this point very strongly: fighting terrorism must not lead us to distort the nature of democratic tolerant life or respect for the rule of law. Preserving our concept of a pluralist, open and tolerant society must be our goal. We cannot be misled or accept distortions of our firm belief in the fundamental human rights and the rights of peoples. Combating terrorism also means, above all, that we must defend the fundamental rights and legal protections of every man and woman. We have a humanist conviction and we must defend it, because otherwise we would be ceding victory to the terrorists. It would also be a

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mistake to believe that the fight against terrorism can be won by military means alone. Military means are admittedly necessary, but are not themselves enough to put an end to this horrible phenomenon.

There is absolutely nothing that can justify terrorism. No cause can justify terror. I categorically and definitively reject the idea that we have to look to the inequities of the world for the source of this perversion of the mind and soul. In my view, that would mitigate this abominable act. The origin of the attack cannot be found there. However, we also know that misery, injustice, poverty, exclusion and humiliation create fertile ground for extremism, intolerance and hatred to flourish by taking advantage of the hopelessness and suffering of those left behind by a society too quickly satisfied by its clear conscience.

Why should we deny it? As our Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt has said, in less than a year we have focused at least four times on the challenges facing the world: at Doha, Monterrey, Rome and Johannesburg. The elimination of poverty, debt reduction and liberalization of international trade as a factor for development are all questions that have been repeatedly discussed. We all come to the same conclusions. We identify the same causes. I am certain that we all know the solutions that must be applied.

With such unanimity, it should be easy to put an end to inequality. It should be easy to bring together a world which for too long has been cut in two, a world that generates tensions and frustrations. There cannot and should not be a superficial division at the margin of our wealth. We need a loftier conception of cooperation, one that derives not from paternalism but rather from partnership and mutual respect.

Putting an end to inequality and forging a new solidarity is the way to ensure sustainable development for future generations. At each of our summits, the rich world has raised the hopes of the millions of indigent people who are searching for a glimmer of light in the darkness. However, each time, at the end of these grand meetings, when the speeches are over, when those who advocate on behalf of the poor have stopped their ritualistic pleadings, poverty remains in place. One gets the impression that we have offered those who expected so much of us only empty rhetoric and posturing.

The Millennium Goals must become a benchmark for all the work of the United Nations and for that of each of its Member States. We have to translate them into financial tools and into access to markets and technology. At Monterrey, my country pledged to reach the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for development cooperation by 2010. We have offered, furthermore, new initiatives on the debt burden.

I also attach paramount importance to follow-up of the Durban Conference against racism, and to the implementation of the Durban Programme of Action. Combating racism, discrimination and intolerance is absolutely essential for the millions of human beings who have often silently suffered from infringements on their dignity. I stress the historic importance of the agreement on the origins and causes of racism. It forms the basis of a new partnership. Unless we recognize past injustices, we will not have a solid basis for future efforts.

Another challenge that we wish to address is to attain absolute gender equality. This is absolutely essential in a civilization of progress, in which our ideals of democracy and humanism are realized. The Secretary-General and his team, including his Deputy, Louise Fréchette, can count on my country's commitment and support for all the reforms under way. We must revitalize the General Assembly, continue the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, expand the Security Council and carry out organizational reforms. I know that the United Nations will take up these challenges.

The outstanding and far-sighted speech made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan rightly, skilfully and resolutely reminded us what, in the final analysis, is the meaning of the world government and parliament. He made his statement very convincingly and intelligently. We share his view on reshaping our Organization so that it can live up to our ambitions.

My country was at the forefront of combating impunity for the most serious crimes and for the rapid development of a true international criminal justice. That is why we continue to support the internationalization of the Rome Statute, and why we are resolved to preserve its integrity. Admittedly, we know that the dialogue is never easy when law interacts with politics, but we are convinced that in the long-term, nothing will block society's right to demand justice when the most serious crimes against

fundamental values are committed. States have primary responsibility for prosecuting the crimes covered in the Statute of the Court. We urge the world community, including the most powerful among us, to give the Court credibility and resources commensurate with its lofty mission.

Conflict prevention is one of my country's foreign policy priorities. We are engaged concretely in preventive diplomacy, particularly in Central Africa, where Belgium is proactively supportive of the Lusaka and Arusha peace processes. Belgium actively advocates this approach within the European Union. Belgium is seeking to make this concept of conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict support an essential part of international doctrine. We need standing monitoring and warning mechanisms to alert us in time to crises. Such mechanisms could spare the lives of many people. For similar reasons, we need to develop a real strategy against the illegal financing of conflicts and the related illegal trade in natural resources. The sordid exploitation of such resources — for instance, conflict diamonds — too often contributes to finance or at least prolong regional tragedies such as civil wars and inter-ethnic conflicts.

To face this challenge, a credible international monitoring system, based on common standards, has to be established. Substantial improvements must be made in the functioning of the various sanctions committees, and we believe that a single monitoring body, with a long-term mandate, should be set up.

Africa is at the centre of our concerns, but also of our hopes. The creation of the African Union during the Durban summit of the Organization of African Unity, along with the dynamic of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), are major steps forward taken in recent months. The strengthening of democracy and the recent successful elections in Africa are an encouraging sign. The prospects for Africa also include regional integration of African countries, which we encourage. We can see some positive but still fragile signs with regard to reconciliation in countries that have been too long devastated by conflicts, such as the Great Lakes region, Angola and the Sudan.

Further efforts have been made this year to find a solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The inter-Congolese dialogue has led, first, to the signing of a partial agreement at Sun City, which created a dynamic of reconciliation, thanks to the efforts of South Africa, to which I pay tribute here. The Pretoria Agreement addresses the main causes of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: its territorial integrity and the security concerns of Rwanda. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has a crucial part to play in ensuring implementation of the Agreement, with its operation to disarm and demobilize the armed groups.

I urge Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take advantage of this opportunity to restore to their peoples the peace and prosperity they deserve. I would also like to pay tribute to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Niasse, for bringing all the Congolese parties to the negotiating table with a view to arriving at a democratic, inclusive agreement.

Through the many meetings I have attended in the region, I have become acquainted with Congolese political figures. I know that they have the will, the authority, the competence and the grasp of history to realize the dream of peace and prosperity of a population which has suffered for too long.

I should like also to pay tribute to the South African and Tanzanian mediation in the context of negotiations for a ceasefire in Burundi. Despite the progress made, there has been a resumption of violence that could undermine the gains recorded in the Arusha process — so ably facilitated by the political and moral authority of President Nelson Mandela. I would also urgently appeal to all international partners to consider which concrete steps should be taken to help Burundi emerge from its political, economic and social crisis. The difficulties prevailing in this area are without a doubt complicating the political solution.

Another area in need of structural stability is the Middle East. Men, women, mothers, fathers, children all are suffering on a daily basis from the violence, and for this reason we must reaffirm those principles that will enable us to find a lasting and equitable solution: land for peace, a viable Palestinian State and security for Israel. Rather than going beyond the gains made through Oslo and Madrid, we should enshrine and reconfirm them by translating them into reality. This is what the European Union has sought to do by drawing up a road map setting out the actions to be taken by the parties concerned with a view to achieving a comprehensive and lasting solution.

Lastly, let me ask a question that I think is of global significance. The question of Iraq is a challenge to all of us, because it involves questions at several different levels: the need to eliminate a major threat to the international community; the need to ensure the credibility of our Organization; the need to determine whether a country has weapons of mass destruction that can bring death to millions of people; the need to determine if a country is failing to meet its obligations to the United Nations; and the need to know if a preventive unilateral military action is or is not a doctrinal problem under international law.

All of these questions are core issues with respect to our Organization, its missions and its individual and collective political responsibilities.

I wish to recall that each and every one of us, in signing the Charter of the United Nations, solemnly undertook to comply with that Charter. Therefore, on behalf of my country and of its citizens, I wish to make a clear appeal to Iraq. I formally and solemnly ask the Iraqi authorities to implement urgently and unconditionally the resolutions adopted by the United Nations. Respect for our Organization and respect for what we are, collectively and individually, is the only way of avoiding recourse to force. I ask the Iraqi authorities to seize this last opportunity.

All of these challenges require a united, multilateral reaction in a spirit of solidarity. The world is a village now, but too often we are rather narrow-minded and do not listen to one another. Sometimes the other is seen as a stranger or even an intruder. Human civilizations must learn more about one another in order to live together in harmony.

The citizens of the world have different perspectives on life, on religion, on the way they organize their society, on the past and the future. But they all dream of justice, happiness and equality. Often they dream the same dream, but the path to implementing that dream sometimes varies. Respecting others even though they are different will help us move towards a more harmonious world. This is what we, as political leaders, have a responsibility to do, in order to broaden day after day the common area of the values that we share.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Lengsavad (Lao People's Democratic Republic): On behalf of the delegation of Laos, I would like, Sir, to convey to you my congratulations on your election to the presidency of this fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

The current session is taking place at a time when Member States have entered the third year of the process of implementation of the Development Goals adopted at the Millennium Summit. During the past two years, satisfactory progress has been made towards those objectives, yet much more needs to be done. It is our view that the war on poverty deserves our greatest attention, for poverty causes millions of deaths and does not allow for sustainable development. Furthermore, our planet is facing the scourge of terrorism in its various forms. Our Government will work in a spirit of solidarity with the world community in the combat against that scourge.

Since the end of the twentieth century, it has been widely claimed that globalization provides tremendous economic and development opportunities to nations. However, it is evident that it has also brought numerous challenges to the majority of the world's population, in particular to those people living in developing countries. The most notable effects of globalization can be seen in the fact that the disparity between the developed and developing countries continues to increase.

Against this backdrop, while the developing countries, with a sense of ownership and partnership, have adopted various measures to cope with its disadvantages, they still find themselves confronted with the problem of securing financing and human resources that can handle new technology; added to this is the inability to access the market of the developed countries. Although the International Conference on Financing for Development and other international conferences have given rise to some hope that these disadvantages and challenges will be addressed, the results have been far from satisfactory.

Moreover, the World Summit held in Johannesburg earlier this month failed to respond to the strong aspirations of the developing countries and of the world community in addressing the issue of sustainable development. Only by implementing the commitments and pledges adopted at those international conferences can we ensure fair and

sustainable development and lasting peace for humankind.

We continue to seek a world of peace, coexistence and cooperation for development. However, to our regret, violent disputes and conflicts continue to rage in many parts of our planet due to the legacies of history and other factors.

We are again gathered here in the conviction that the United Nations, as the only truly universal Organization, should have a greater responsibility and a more important role to play, in accordance with Charter and international law, in resolving various disputes in the world and in preventing the emergence of new hot spots and interference in the internal affairs of independent and sovereign States.

We should also continue to call for reform of the United Nations with a view to enabling it to rise to the formidable challenge of poverty eradication and the promotion of sustainable development. In particular, the Security Council should be reformed so as to ensure that it fulfils its responsibilities in safeguarding peace and security. In this context, I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, who has worked tirelessly to render our Organization more effective, and wish him even greater success in his endeavours.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic shares the international community's deep concern about the excessive use of force in the Middle East since March this year. In conformity with the common position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Middle East peace process, the Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that only a politically negotiated settlement acceptable to both parties and implemented under international supervision will bring peace, stability and cooperation to the region. Such a settlement must be based on respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent and viable State of their own, so that they can live side by side with Israel in peace and security within internationally recognized borders, in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic also expresses great concern about the issue of Iraq — an independent and sovereign nation, and a State Member of the United Nations. We are of the view that this issue should be resolved by the United Nations through political means.

With regard to the Caribbean region, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reiterates its call for the lifting of the economic, financial and trade embargo imposed against the Republic of Cuba by the Government of the United States of America. An end to this long-standing and obsolete policy would not only mean effective compliance with various General Assembly resolutions, international law and the current world thinking, but also promote economic prosperity and cooperation in the region as a whole.

With regard to the Korean Peninsula, the Lao Government welcomes the recent positive developments, especially the inter-Korean ministerial talks, as well as the preparation for negotiations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the United States of America and Japan. These developments will help pave the way for the achievement of the goal of the peaceful national reunification of Korea, and significantly contribute to the consolidation of peace and stability in East Asia and the Asia-Pacific region.

While many other countries are taking advantage of the benefits offered by globalization, the landlocked developing countries are still marginalized due to their geographical disadvantage. Their lack of territorial access to the sea, and their remoteness and isolation from major international markets, as well as the high transit transport costs, continue to be major obstacles for those countries in meeting objectives of national economic development and poverty eradication. Moreover, this geographical handicap deprives us of our right to be competitive in the international trading system and to fully benefit from it. As the country holding the chairmanship of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, the Lao People's Democratic Republic expresses its appreciation to the General Assembly for its decision, taken last year, to convene in 2003 an International Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Developmental Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation.

Over the past year, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has recorded a number of important achievements in the field of socio-economic development. One event of significance was the successful election of the fifth National Assembly on 24 February this year. This has contributed to the gradual improvement of living standards of the Lao

people across all ethnic groups and ensured and strengthened political stability and social order.

While extending its cooperation to the international community in many spheres, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has contributed to the strengthening of Asian solidarity and to the cause of peace, friendship, cooperation and development for nations throughout the world.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vartan Oskanian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Mr. Oskanian (Armenia): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, and to wish you success in your work. I would also like to thank Mr. Han Seung-soo for having so ably conducted the work of the fifty-sixth session.

It is with special pleasure that I welcome the admission of the Swiss Confederation to the United Nations. That we have the pleasure and the opportunity to welcome such a new Member — a long-standing democracy which has only recently chosen to enter this forum — is continuing testimony to the vitality, viability and relevance of this unique body.

This time last year, new States and old were thunderstruck by a terror that is still indescribable. We were reeling from the enormity of what terrorism had wrought, even as we sought to understand why it had happened. Millenniums of experience of the devastation of war had not provided us with the tools necessary to understand that new form of combat.

Today, a year later, as we persevere with the arduous endeavour to eradicate the affliction, we also continue to search for causes. We distinguish, certainly, between comprehending and concurring, awareness and acquiescence, understanding and justification. At the same time, we recognize that diagnosis does not always result in a cure.

We cannot go back to where we were a year ago, either in our assumptions or in our actions. The fundamental question we must all answer is: what is it that we can and cannot, should and should not, do to other human beings? The answer must include a rejection of flagrant injustice and abject poverty. That would go a long way towards alleviating the hopelessness that perpetuates such societal ills.

Bearing that in mind, we welcome the targets and timetables adopted to spur action on a wide range of issues at the recently concluded World Summit on Sustainable Development. Critical among those goals is the need to provide and manage water as a basic element of life and a basic requirement for dignified living. Without that, neither economic nor political stability is possible. The other two major United Nations events of this year — the International Conference on Financing for Development and the special Assembly session on children — also demonstrate that social and economic development must be tackled in tandem in order to attain global peace and security.

In Armenia, too, we are focusing on both aspects of development. The Armenian Government's poverty reduction strategy aims to establish an umbrella for the formulation and implementation of sustainable human development strategies in areas damaged by earthquakes and conflict. We shall do that by building domestic capacities for governance and by restoring social services in education and health, agricultural development, reforestation and disaster preparedness.

Armenia's response to the very special session on children is the elaboration and implementation of its National Plan of Action for Children. The National Plan of Action sets 10-year goals for the protection of the rights of the child, outlines principal strategies, and establishes indicators and mechanisms for monitoring progress towards the enumerated goals.

The past decades of summits and forums on the variety of social and economic ills that face modern societies have amply demonstrated that committed partnerships are necessary for serious progress. At home, Government and civil society must work together to implement the decisions of such forums, but, at the global level, Governments and international agencies must also provide the resources and impetus for their universal agendas.

Economic prosperity hinges on internal, regional and international stability. That stability, in turn, depends on cooperation and goodwill. In our region, despite the existence of various conflicts, we continue to be hopeful that democratic processes will create civil societies with responsible leaders committed to the resolution of political issues.

In Armenia, we look forward to a year of elections: presidential elections — the fourth held since

independence — will be followed by parliamentary elections, which in turn will be followed by a referendum on constitutional reforms. We are proud that we have had a working Constitution for more than seven years, and that that Constitution has seen us through difficult periods without leading to domestic turmoil. Nevertheless, we recognize the need — as in any evolving society — to make some changes in order to reflect more accurately our commitment to becoming a society that respects the rule of law and the rights of individuals.

We are equally proud that the Armenians of Nagorny-Karabakh, in the midst of their ongoing struggle for self-determination, have also completed another presidential election cycle. Indeed, the people of Nagorny-Karabakh deserve to be commended for establishing the rule of law despite continuing adverse social and economic conditions.

As the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Co-Chairmen of its Minsk Group continue to work with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorny-Karabakh towards a settlement that will wisely — i.e. with an eye to the realities on the ground — determine Nagorny-Karabakh's final status, it is self-evident that only a democratically elected leadership that enjoys a popular mandate will be able to participate actively and legitimately in the final negotiations that affect the status of its own people. With that in mind, in 1992, at the Helsinki Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, it was decided that elected and other representatives of Nagorny-Karabakh would be invited to the Minsk Conference, entrusted with determining the final status of Nagorny-Karabakh.

Therefore, while elections and democratization do not presume a particular status, self-determination is always more legitimate when accompanied by democratic processes. The international community seems to understand, often welcomes and sometimes assists in electoral democratic processes in areas whose international legal status is still in flux and ostensibly subject to the sovereignty of an existing State. We do not understand why such wise and non-prejudicial approaches or strategies should be denied to Nagorny-Karabakh, where de facto self-rule has already been in place for almost 10 years.

Democratization and self-determination become both necessary and inevitable when the formation of a new independent entity takes place inside States that are deficient in democracy and whose respect for human rights and application of United Nations principles is unsatisfactory. Nothing demonstrates that fact more than East Timor's forthcoming membership in this body. So it is with pleasure that we express to that country the heartfelt congratulations of the Armenian Government. East Timor's coming membership is proof that a blanket rejection of claims to self-determination is invalid and does not take into account the very real fact that such movements are not, by their nature, all alike or even similar. Different struggles for self-determination have evolved in decidedly different ways; therefore, each has to be treated differently.

The challenge for the international community continues to be to adopt policies that will contribute to the peaceful solution of each conflict. In order to adopt correct policies, criteria must be established by which to evaluate and judge each case on its own merit, realistically taking into account the real situation on the ground in order to attain lasting peace.

That peace is what the people of Nagorny-Karabakh and the whole region are still waiting for, and one would think that it is also what the leadership of Azerbaijan want. Based on the very hopeful meetings that are taking place between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, we have reasons to be positive. However, having followed the comments that my colleague from Azerbaijan made this morning from this podium, I am not only shocked but also dismayed that he is not keeping pace with the progress being made in the region by the Presidents of both our countries.

It has been two years since the meetings at Paris and Key West, where the international community put forth their views on this issue. Since then, some Azerbaijani officials, out of desperation or ignorance, have used every means at their disposal to discredit the initiatives of the international community, looking for ways to artificially link them to the critical issues of the day.

After 11 September, the talk of the threat of international terrorism caused Azerbaijan to make accusations that went full circle in damaging its own reputation when, according to Western sources, Azerbaijan's own 10-year-long relationship with terrorists came to the surface and it was demonstrated

that Azerbaijan had indeed served as a regional terrorist hub. So that did not work. Today, as the international community speaks of countries' responsibilities under Security Council resolutions, Azerbaijan frivolously makes the same accusation against Armenia, without considering that Armenia has done exactly what the international community expected: it has used its good offices, with the leadership of Nagorny-Karabakh, to help find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Azerbaijan has a choice: continue with crude delusional manipulation and naive wishful thinking and hope for a return to a historical military and political situation that ended long ago, or join the international community, through the good offices of the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE's Minsk Group, in order to continue in the difficult search for peace. The people on the ground on all sides have demonstrated their readiness for peace and for political and economic stability. Leaders at the highest level are maintaining the honest dialogue that will chip away at political obstacles. We who are entrusted with transforming those efforts and desires into a just peace must approach our task honestly and responsibly.

Let me say that Nagorny-Karabakh has never, ever been a part of independent Azerbaijan. Whether we consider history or geography, whether we adopt a long-term political perspective or face the reality of the facts on the ground, the men, women and children of Nagorny-Karabakh have earned the right to live peacefully on their historic lands.

I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate President Kocharian's statement before the General Assembly two years ago with respect to working for the recognition of the Armenian genocide and preventing the repetition of such an atrocity. We extend our profound appreciation to all those Governments, legislatures and international bodies that have recognized the Armenian genocide and pledge our cooperation to all those that are currently in the process of reaffirming the facts of that crime against humanity. As a signatory of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Armenian Government places a high priority on the struggle to prevent future genocide and to stand up against all attempts to deny past genocide. We support all initiatives that reinforce the international consensus behind that landmark treaty.

It is becoming clear that this millennium, too, will not be violence-free. Today, when global peace appears a distant hope, Armenia observes the volatility in the Caucasus, the Middle East and elsewhere with trepidation. To face such challenges, Armenia supports proposals by the Secretary-General aimed at the strengthening of the Organization so that it can face new challenges in a more satisfactory way. Additionally, Armenia is in favour of more equitable representation on the Security Council, as well as more transparency in its activities.

The situation in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and around Iraq remains a continuing example of the need for a vibrant and strengthened United Nations able to assert the will of the Organization's membership and empowered with greater authority to implement its decisions.

As States and Governments continue to search for new ways to deal with emerging internal conflicts and increasingly complex interrelationships, Armenia is of the belief that the United Nations must stand for all the easy-to-orate but difficult-to-deliver principles of economic and political justice and equality among peoples. Given our uneven history and problematic geography, it is no surprise that Armenia is an advocate of multilateralism and collective security. From the vantage point of a country with our resources and limitations, we realize that peace is not possible without social justice, sustainable development and respect for the rights of all individuals and peoples in the community of nations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Marwan Muasher, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jordan.

Mr. Muasher (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to extend to you, Sir, and to your friendly country, the Czech Republic, warm congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. Your record of prudence and diplomatic skill will certainly be instrumental in meeting the lofty goals sought by all nations and peoples. A word of thanks and tribute goes to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his outstanding stewardship of the fifty-sixth session.

Two States are being admitted to the membership of our Organization: the Swiss Confederation and, soon, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Despite

their differing histories, each will strengthen the fabric and enrich the tapestry of the United Nations. Jordan bids a warm welcome to both of them and wishes them well.

The opening of the current session coincided with the first anniversary of the heinous terrorist attacks against New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. As I reiterate Jordan's condemnation of those terrorist acts, let me express once again our deep condolences and sympathy to the families of the thousands of victims who lost their lives as a result of the cowardly and criminal acts that targeted our Organization's host city and host nation. The list of victims is multinational, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural. That graphically illustrates the fact that terrorism is indeed blind to all those criteria. The international community rose to the occasion when it provided a prompt, collective, decisive response. Indeed, it was the United Nations itself that provided the forum for a global coalition underpinned by both our common political will and the compelling case before us. Thus, the Assembly adopted resolution 56/1, while the Security Council adopted its resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001). That set of decisions, embraced by our world body, which represents all human cultures, ideologies and ethnicities, created the official platform for launching the ongoing global campaign against terrorism.

My country, Jordan, has also suffered from terrorism and its evils. Terrorists have struck at our national symbols, our citizens and our interests because of our principled positions, foremost among them our firm commitment to fight terrorism. All along, Jordan has been in the vanguard of every international effort aimed at hunting down this plague and confronting it, including by draining its resources as part of an overall drive to uproot it altogether.

In parallel, Jordan's stance is clear-cut and decisive. We reject and condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We have declared in no uncertain terms this firm conviction against terrorism, irrespective of its source, the perpetrators or the identity of the victims. Furthermore, we allow no room for any justification whatsoever, including any possible arguments on religious, ethnic or national grounds. Thus, Jordan treats all forms of terrorism as criminal acts.

In the same context, let me stress our conviction that the eradication of terrorism is a common goal of all States and societies. I wish therefore to draw the Assembly's attention to the blatant tendency, driven by pernicious and wicked intentions, to falsely link terrorism to a specific religion or culture. I trust that this gathering shares my view that it is now imperative to confront these dubious attempts. Indeed, dealing with such schemes is indispensable if we are to maintain the sustained and concerted campaign to achieve the paramount objective: the total eradication of terrorism.

The current situation in the Middle East is extremely dangerous. The whole landscape is constantly changing for the worse, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel's reoccupation of the Palestinian Authority's territories and the perpetuation of this occupation, together with the measures and policies emanating thereof, particularly policies of closure and siege, have created intolerable living conditions for the Palestinian people. These unbearable conditions have prompted several humanitarian agencies and international organs to declare a state of emergency. Israeli measures to strangle the Palestinian people economically and politically, with a view to bringing the Palestinians to their knees and to coercing them into surrendering their rights, have reached inadmissible levels of seriousness. Malnutrition rates among the Palestinian population have doubled. Diseases related to malnutrition and hunger have become widespread, particularly among children, women and the elderly. The joint impact of all these factors has created breeding grounds for frustration and despair, which inevitably generate hatred, grudges and violence.

Therefore, this situation must be addressed effectively and expeditiously. We hope that the first move will come from Israel in the form of ending its occupation of Palestinian towns without delay. We also expect Israel to cease forthwith its policies of closures and siege. It is in Israel's interest to pursue constructive policies towards the Palestinians in order to restore mutual confidence and to rehabilitate the values of reconciliation and coexistence between the two peoples. It is our considered view that Israel's current approach is irrational, as it results in excessive use of force, which in turn fuels and deepens hatred and replenishes the sources of violence.

While we welcome the few visible signs of relief, as reflected in the accord reached by the Palestinian and Israeli sides on 19 August 2002, which calls for progressive withdrawal by Israel from certain Palestinian towns that have been reoccupied by Israel, we call on Israel to implement faithfully and expeditiously Security Council resolution 1402 (2002), which provides for full Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian cities.

From a political and humanitarian point of view, Jordan stands against targeting Israeli civilians and concurs with the need to address the whole spectrum of security issues. However, it maintains that the only viable course for addressing the Palestinian-Israeli question lies in the resumption of the peace process as a whole, from the point where it stalled and within the agreed framework established on the basis of complete Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories; the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 425 (1978) and 1397 (2002).

In that context, I wish to stress the significance of the initiative adopted by the Arab leaders at the Beirut Arab Summit last March. That initiative outlined a balanced approach in terms of practical ideas and arguments that demonstrate beyond any doubt a genuine pan-Arab commitment to just, lasting and comprehensive peace. That plan is a pledge by Arab States to conclude peace agreements with Israel in return for its complete withdrawal from the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories to the 4 June 1967 borders, the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem its capital and finding a just and agreed solution to the Palestinian refugees question on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

I trust that the Government of Israel will rise to the level of the hopes and aspirations of the Arab peoples and the people of Israel to live in peace, justice and dignity. We hope that the Government of Israel will be forthcoming in response to that balanced and sincere initiative, which gained the acceptance of all States and parties interested in the peace process. Furthermore, this initiative is also in line with the vision and the commitment outlined by President George W. Bush of the United States on the form and aim of a final solution on the Palestinian-Israeli track based on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state existing alongside the State of Israel by mid-2005 at the latest.

In that regard, Jordan supports efforts being made to draw up a clear road map leading to the implementation of President Bush's commitment through, first, defining the obligations of both the Palestinian and Israeli sides; secondly, setting a clear timetable for all phases of carrying out those obligations so that the deadline for the birth of the independent Palestinian State will not, under any circumstances, extend beyond mid-2005; and, thirdly, agreeing to the creation of an international supervisory mechanism that ensures the timely and orderly implementation of those measures as well as monitoring the implementation process.

We hope that this vision will be examined at the Quartet meeting in New York within the next few days, with a view to adopting it into a plan of action and a comprehensive international obligation. Subsequently, the parties will embark on the implementation process within the specified framework, whose outcome will be the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within less than three years. We also hope that this achievement will generate a fresh impetus to conclude comprehensive peace on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks within the same time frame.

In compliance with the United Nations principles enshrined in the Charter, particularly Article 2, paragraph 4, which prohibits the threat or use of force in international relations, and considering that this right is exclusively assigned to the Security Council so that the Council may exercise it in case of a breach of international peace and security, Jordan believes that the most appropriate means for resolving the matters outstanding between the United Nations and Iraq is to ensure the immediate and full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions, including those relating to Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons as well as to the return of the weapons inspectors. If these conditions are met, the people of Iraq, who have been suffering for too long, would be saved from military action that would exacerbate that suffering. The aforementioned formula would also spare the entire region the dire consequences of military operations.

In the context of emphasizing the principle of resolving disputes by peaceful means, we invite the

Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the call made by the United Arab Emirates to reach a peaceful settlement of the problem of the three islands. We urge Iran to accept referral of this case to the International Court of Justice. We also encourage the efforts made by the two sides in Cyprus to reach a just and peaceful solution to the Cypriot question. We also call for the peaceful resolution of the dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. We have no doubt that the Assembly will support and strengthen those efforts.

Jordan recognizes the nature of the transformations that have taken place in international relations and the global landscape over the past decade. Thus, we stress the need for the United Nations to adapt accordingly, through effective streamlining, so that it will maintain its relevance as the primary international forum of global cooperation and coordination in all human fields. A robust United Nations would also remain the true embodiment of the hopes and the aspirations of all mankind.

Here, I wish to pay special tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the foresight, dynamism and flexibility he brings into play while performing his duties. Those fine personal qualities enhance his impressive performance, which Jordan supports and appreciates.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In closing, I would like to warmly welcome the establishment of the International Criminal Court and the entry into force of its Statute. Our expectation is that the Court will enhance the great principles and purposes of the United Nations itself. Let me underline our absolute support for all efforts aimed at strengthening and revitalizing the United Nations system, including the ongoing structural reform exercise and the review of Security Council membership with a view to its expansion in order to make it more representative of the new international realities. Finally, I wish the Assembly all success in its deliberations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Mr. Joseph Borg, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta.

Mr. Borg (Malta): Allow me to begin by offering Mr. Jan Kavan my Government's warm congratulations as he assumes the presidency of the General Assembly. He has served the Czech Republic so well as Foreign Minister, and I have full faith in his ability to meet the numerous challenges that the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly will no doubt present. I assure him of my delegation's full support in the execution of his duties.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Mr. Han Seung-soo for the skill and dedication with which he served this body during the session that has just come to a close.

It gives the Government of Malta great pleasure to welcome the recent admission of the Swiss Confederation to our family of nations. We look forward to also welcoming among us the Democratic Republic of East Timor. Their addition serves to further strengthen the trust and belief of all our nations that dialogue within a multilateral context is both worthwhile and irreplaceable.

Over the past couple of weeks the international community has been seized of the issue of sustainable development. Malta participated actively in the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in South Africa, and although the Summit's very ambitious objectives could not all be reached, we are satisfied that a plan of action — the Plan of Implementation — with specific targets to tackle key development problems has been adopted. Throughout the negotiations, Malta worked closely with the European Union to include concrete plans and targets in the plan of action. As a result, the Summit agreed on a series of commitments in priority areas such as water and sanitation, desertification, energy and biodiversity. It is our hope that the plan of action will attract the necessary additional resources that will make its implementation possible, thereby making sustainable development a reality for an ever-increasing proportion of humanity.

When I had the honour to address the Assembly at the last general debate, in November 2001, I pledged my Government's full support for the Franco-German initiative against the reproductive cloning of human beings. As a sponsor of resolution 56/93, which established the relevant Ad Hoc Committee, we have carefully followed the deliberations within the Committee on the philosophical, medical, legal and ethical considerations associated with this pressing issue. This was a necessary debate which brought to the fore the consensus that exists on the need to

respond to the challenges posed by scientists who are unable or unwilling to recognize the deep moral implications of their actions, as well as the dangers that they may pose to mankind. The convergence of political will has now been manifested. The time is therefore ripe for the Ad Hoc Committee to be given a clear mandate to negotiate a convention on this matter. My Government will strive for the timely conclusion of negotiations in this regard, preferably before the end of 2003. However, whether or not the international community concludes such a convention before attempts at reproductive human cloning actually materialize, it is imperative that, through international action and national legislation, Member States deny safe haven to those scientists willing to defy the international community.

Before this year is out we shall be commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. When, as a newly independent State, Malta called for the commencement of negotiations on such a convention, it was concerned with the numerous unresolved issues of the rights and obligations of States with regard to seas and oceans, and with the seeds of countless conflicts that they might sow. It is today impossible to speculate on the number of occasions on which the legal certainties that the Convention brought about have helped to defuse, dissipate or prevent altogether the scourge of conflict and war. It is the curse of international law in our times to make the news headlines only when it fails, while passing unnoticed and unsung when it succeeds.

We would do well to remain conscious of the role that international law, based on the multilateral process, plays in the prevention of conflict and the avoidance of threats to international security. That is to say, we would do well to remember the role it plays in upholding the central mandate of the United Nations itself. The role of the instruments of international law, and in particular those such as the Convention on the Law of the Sea, should be recognized for the contribution they provide in that regard.

United Nations Headquarters has just played host to the historic first session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The complex changes to national legislation necessary to allow for Malta's ratification of the Rome Statute have now reached an advanced stage and are expected to be presented to Parliament in the coming days, thus enabling Malta to formally deposit its instrument of ratification very soon.

The new International Criminal Court (ICC) has its roots in the atrocities carried out during the last century — not least those addressed at the Nuremberg trials. The ICC is thus a product of the lessons learned over time and of the widespread political will that has led to the creation of a credible deterrent to the would-be perpetrators of the most heinous crimes. The ICC thus provides an effective, competent and fair forum where those individuals may be tried. The establishment of the Court also represents a major breakthrough in international law and one which has become more — and not less — crucial now that terrorism has imposed itself high on our international agenda.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 still loom large in our memories. The anniversary of that tragedy has again filled our television screens with horrific scenes of suffering and death. It has served to remind us of the resolve which is necessary in the face of such horror. My Government has taken part in the fight against international terrorism with full determination, and will continue to do so. This is evidenced not only by our thorough implementation of the international conventions on terrorism and the ongoing process towards the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) but also by ever-tighter controls and scrutiny at our ports. We undertake further to intensify our efforts in this field in order to assist in the permanent eradication of terrorism in whatever shape or form.

The continued turbulence in the Middle East also continues to be a source of great concern to my Government. The cycle of violence that continues to engulf the region provides a confirmation, if ever one were needed, that there is no purely military solution to the conflict. The extrajudicial killings of Palestinians, the deliberate destruction of the property and livelihoods of innocent civilians and the subjection of the entire Palestinian population to collective punishment does not dim the wholly legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to a State of their own.

Likewise, the targeting of Israeli civilians in suicide bombings and other forms of destruction of the lives and property of innocent civilians does untold

harm to the cause the perpetrators of those crimes claim to support.

No cause, no argument and no justification can legitimize these abhorrent acts by either party to the conflict.

My Government looks on in anguish as a fence, reminiscent of the Berlin wall, that most shameful of symbols of the twentieth century, slowly takes shape. It is a harrowing reminder of how little mankind has learned from the past, particularly if we look back to the outbreak of violence in the region since September 2000.

Unjustified preconditions to the start of political negotiations further hinder any progress in the discussions on a two-State solution to the conflict. Negotiations, which must start without further delay, must be built on the clear and plain language of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. The recent initiative by the States members of the European Union in presenting a road map for the Middle East which outlines a three-stage process leading to the creation of a Palestinian State by 2005 provides a genuine basis for taking negotiations forward. The international community looks to the Quartet to advance in that direction with urgency.

An issue which continues to persist in the Mediterranean is the situation in Cyprus, which has remained a cause of concern for more than 25 years. We earnestly hope that an early settlement of the Cyprus question will be found and reiterate our full support for efforts to find a solution on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions. The imminent accession of Cyprus to the European Union should provide the necessary impetus for the resolution of this long-standing problem.

Malta is encouraged by the efforts of the Secretary-General to engage the Organization in the quest to achieve a resolution to the situation with regard to Iraq before it deteriorates any further. My Government calls upon the Iraqi Government to comply with all its obligations under all the provisions of relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular those concerning disarmament with respect to weapons of mass destruction. Iraq must meet its commitments and allow the re-entry of United Nations inspectors into its territory without any preconditions and as stipulated by the Security Council.

The international community should spare no effort in exploring all political and diplomatic options that would or could assist in resolving the issue. Malta is in agreement with the Secretary-General that if Iraq fails to meet its obligations, the Security Council, as the organ entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must shoulder its responsibilities. The Security Council has to ensure compliance with its own resolutions in the interest of the international rule of law.

Malta's location at the centre of the Mediterranean has provided us with opportunities for trade and development, which we have been relatively successful at exploiting in the interest of our island, which is otherwise bereft of natural resources. Our strategic location is, however, now also the scene of another socio-economic phenomenon of a much less encouraging nature. I speak here of the poverty divide that cuts across the Mediterranean Sea.

The countries of the Mediterranean littoral share much in terms of history, culture and way of life. However the ever more apparent disparities of wealth continue to fuel the movement of thousands of people from the southern Mediterranean and further afield to entrust their lives and hopes into the hands of unscrupulous individuals. These traffickers of human beings, willing to exploit misery and desperation, have little respect for human life and often abandon the would-be immigrants to the elements once they have secured their ill-gotten gains. My Government has increased the punishment meted out to those found guilty of such heinous acts. We have also bolstered our surveillance and rescue capability within our territorial waters and are simultaneously seeking to provide treatment that is as humane as possible to the victims that land on our shores. These efforts have been made, however, in the full knowledge that they deal more with the symptoms of the phenomenon of human trafficking than with its root causes.

The imperative of narrowing the wealth divide across the Mediterranean is one of the philosophical cornerstones of the Euro-Med process, which exists to bring the European Union and 12 Mediterranean States together on a number of issues of common concern. Malta has been an avid supporter of the process since its inception and looks forward to developing its role further within this forum as a member of the European Union in the near future.

My Government believes that the accession of Malta to the European Union will serve to further enhance our capability to promote peace and prosperity within the Mediterranean, given our reputation as an honest broker that can identify with both sides of the Mediterranean.

Inasmuch as this is the case, we also believe that membership in the Union will also serve to strengthen our own internal workings at all levels of society, bringing prosperity to the Maltese both now and for the years to come. Indeed, we believe that membership in the European Union constitutes a natural progression for Malta, given our long-standing historical, cultural and political ties with the Union.

The negotiations concerning membership that are currently under way are nearing completion, and we look forward to joining this union of like-minded States at its next enlargement, in line with the timelines established at the Nice meeting of the European Council.

Malta has always played a role on the international scene far in excess of its size. This we intend to continue, and I anticipate that all our efforts will combine with those of the other nations of the world to bring about improvements in all the areas that urgently call for our immediate attention. This unswerving determination will guide our efforts in the various forums of which we form part and in the activities we undertake, as together we strive to make a better and secure world for this and future generations.

I wish the President every success in his endeavours in presiding over the General Assembly.

The Acting President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. László Kovács, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary.

Mr. Kovács (Hungary): Let me at the outset extend to His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, former Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, our sincere congratulations upon his election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I want to assure him that he can safely count on the full support of my delegation in discharging his important responsibilities.

I would also like to welcome in our midst the latest new State Member of the United Nations, Switzerland.

It was only four days ago, when so many of us here paid tribute at Ground Zero to the memories of the thousands of victims who lost their lives last year in the brutal 11 September terrorist attacks. The remembrance there was heartbreaking, but at the same time it was a day of resolve as well. There is no doubt in my mind: this was a time that again brought into focus our deep commitment to freedom and democracy. In that regard, I would like to reiterate that the people and the Government of Hungary continue to maintain relentlessly their strong solidarity with the United States.

Our contemporary world has been decisively transformed since 11 September 2001. The fight against international terrorism is high on our agenda. Hungary is strongly committed to the effective efforts of the community of nations to counter this threat. Towards that goal, we have consistently acted in cooperation with our allies and the rest of the international community.

In that respect, Hungary supports the ongoing global endeavours of the United Nations aimed against terrorism. We find it crucial that Member States make every necessary and possible move to prevent further terrorist acts and implement national measures under relevant Security Council resolutions to combat that phenomenon. Effective cooperation among States is also indispensable to act resolutely against the menace of terrorism.

Besides being a reliable partner in the global coalition, Hungary has taken the necessary domestic legislative and executive measures to implement the decisions of the international community. The Parliament of Hungary this week took the decision to ratify the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. By this legislative act, Hungary has become a party to all of the international instruments adopted by the United Nations against terrorism. We continue to attach particular importance to the unimpeded work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council, with which we maintain a particularly close relationship.

In the context of the global coalition against terrorism, Hungary is following developments in Afghanistan with keen interest. We welcome the consolidation achieved so far by the Government of Afghanistan with the assistance of the international community. We wish to place on record our deep

appreciation for the excellent work done by the international forces, in that country. Further efforts to contain and eliminate terrorist groups in Afghanistan will remain a top priority. Hungary is committed to maintaining its support to the Government of Afghanistan as well as to its people.

Iraqi non-compliance with Security Council resolutions is a serious concern for all of us. Hungary regrets that the Iraqi regime refuses to cooperate with the United Nations and continues to pose a threat to peace and security in the region and the world at large. The international community cannot disregard this fact and has to respond to it in a resolute manner. We will work closely with our allies and partners to pursue the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, and we will do our share in the efforts to build a broad coalition of nations in order to prevent the Iraqi regime from producing and using weapons of mass destruction.

Having entered the twenty-first century, mankind continues to face further major global challenges, such as illicit drug trafficking, money-laundering, corruption and transnational organized crime. The role of the United Nations in facing and tackling these phenomena is of paramount importance. By the same token, global risks are widened by new types of security threats. In our view, serious problems of regional stability, of low-intensity armed conflicts and threats of natural and man-made catastrophes are increasingly on the rise. Illegal transfers of nuclear, biological and chemical materials pose grave threats. Illegal migration and illicit trafficking in human beings are also rightly viewed as new forms of security risks. Hungary is more than prepared to play its role, with all the means at our disposal, to meet these new challenges through concerted international efforts, including regional arrangements.

The year 2002 marked the beginning of a new review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We expect the annual sessions of the Preparatory Committee leading up to the 2005 Review Conference to make a significant contribution to the further strengthening of all aspects of this legal instrument by ensuring its full implementation and promoting its universality.

The early start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty stands out as the next logical step aimed at curbing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We cannot but regret that disagreements over the comprehensive programme of work are preventing the Conference on Disarmament from starting substantive work on this issue.

One of the most important new threats to international peace and stability in the changed security environment at the beginning of the twenty-first century is caused by the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. Hungary is ready to join international efforts to counter this danger, including new political and diplomatic initiatives. The system of multilateral legal norms relating to non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control fails to include regulations on responsible international behaviour concerning ballistic missiles. Out of the several propositions emerged recently, Hungary lends its utmost support to the negotiations on an international code of conduct against the proliferation of ballistic missiles. We appreciate the vigorous efforts of the States members of the European Union to move this process forward and hope for its successful completion in the near future.

Developments over the past 12 months have raised more critically than ever the question of how to address in an efficient way the challenges posed by the deliberate spread of disease, such as the anthrax incidents. The reinforcement of national public health and civilian defence capabilities is crucial, even though there are only a few countries that, acting alone, can put meaningful assets in place. International cooperation in this respect must not be a distant opportunity; it is in the interest of each and every country, and of all nations as a whole.

Complementary preventive efforts would be needed as well to at least diminish the likelihood of such an occurrence. Among such preventive efforts, the benchmarking of arms control compliance will eventually have to find its legitimate place. That is why we deem important the successful conclusion of the Fifth Review Conference of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, to be resumed in November this year under Hungarian chairmanship. Hungary remains strongly committed to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its verification regime. In this regard, we concur with the view that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation will also be essential to combat international terrorism.

Hungary has, from the very beginning, given its strong support to the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC has become the first major multilateral legal institution of the twenty-first century. We were proud to become a State party to the Statute of the ICC and to be among those whose ratification helped bring about the entry into force of the Statute this year. We firmly concur with the view that international law will be strengthened through this new legal institution.

As a sign of our deep commitment to the Rome Statute, my Government has decided to nominate a candidate to the panel of judges of the ICC. I am confident that the election of a Hungarian judge would contribute to the genuine realization of the objectives set out in the Rome Statute.

Human rights are universal values. States Members of the United Nations are expected to observe the norms and standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including minority rights, adopted by the United Nations. By the same token, it will remain the moral and political responsibility of States to call upon others to act in accordance with their voluntarily undertaken obligations. Hungary will not hesitate to raise its voice when human rights are violated in any part of the world. International protection of minority rights remains a major preoccupation for us. We continue to pursue our efforts aimed at a functioning universal legal system for the protection of minorities.

Globalization and interdependence are two major phenomena shaping the contemporary world, including the political landscape of the United Nations.

By taking advantage of the opportunities stemming from these phenomena, all of us could seek a much better life for the inhabitants of our globe. The United Nations has the necessary instruments at hand. A better and more responsible use of these instruments can contribute to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration Development Goals, aimed at creating a more prosperous and sustainable world for generations to come.

If we have the necessary political will and determination, we can have a United Nations that works relentlessly to improve the lives of all. That is, in the final analysis, what the United Nations was founded for.

The Acting President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. George Papandreou, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece): The challenges we face at the beginning of the twenty-first century are immense. We are facing terrible poverty; crises and wars; millions of refugees; the hideous face of terrorism; trafficking in human beings, arms and drugs; and regions decimated by disease as we continue to destroy the earth's ecological balance.

There are no simple answers to these problems. But there is a place where we all can meet to find solutions: the United Nations. The world needs a strong United Nations.

I have just quoted my Swiss colleague, first of all to celebrate his country's and East Timor's entry into the United Nations, and secondly because I fully agree with his statement.

In the words of Kofi Annan:

> "The more a country makes use of multilateral institutions — thereby respecting shared values, and accepting the obligations and restraints inherent in those values — the more others will trust and respect it, and the stronger its chance to exercise true leadership". *(See A/57/PV.2)*

I know the personal commitment of my dear friend Jan Kavan, the President, to this principle. Our two countries have worked closely in a common effort to promote peace, the rule of law and shared values in South-eastern Europe.

Today we can be proud that we also contributed in changing this region. It is no longer "CNN-able", as our colleague from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Lagumdjia, said yesterday.

Yet this has not been an easy process.

Take my country, Greece. In the previous century, we went through two world wars, two Balkan wars and a major war with Turkey, which resulted in millions of refugees and in painful population exchanges. We suffered under civil war, famine and dictatorship. We witnessed the forced division of Cyprus through military invasion and occupation by Turkey, and the recent wars in the disintegrating former Yugoslavia in our backyard. Not far from us, conflict continues. We stand ready to support all efforts to ensure that Israel

may be secure and that the Palestinians may have a State they can call their own.

It is no wonder that today we cherish the peace we have achieved. It is no wonder that we cherish the fact that Greece today has its most stable democracy in modern history, that we are among the more prosperous countries in the world, and that we will soon be hosting one of the most demanding events humankind has created, the Olympics. This to us is a responsibility.

We have learned our lessons. We are where we are today only because of our people's steadfast commitment to work for the shared values of democracy, peace, justice, and human rights.

It is no wonder that Greece has become a champion of the enlargement of the European Union, because the European Union is a community of values, and being a community of values is the biggest peace project of our region. We have a responsibility to our neighbours, from Turkey to Bosnia and Herzegovina, to see them, sooner or later, part of this wider European family — creating a new vision where all can share the values of peace and democracy and be citizens of the European Union.

We have learned that at the heart of these conflicts are human beings, as the Danish Prime Minister, Mr. Rasmussen, has said. We have learned that democracy and human rights are fundamental to the life and dignity of all human beings.

Whenever our global principles are violated, it is usually in societies and places where extremism and lack of democracy exist. I believe that democracy will isolate the phenomena that we have seen in recent years, such as that of 11 September.

We in Greece have also known terrorism. We have suffered at the hands of a small terrorist organization called November 17. Since June, Greek security forces have brought all the key members of November 17 to justice. This formidable achievement was supported by assistance from allied intelligence agencies, to which we are indebted for their support. This experience is just one more example of how close international cooperation can accomplish common goals and protect our common values. It is also a tribute to our long-lasting democratic institutions.

In the European Union, we are building not only a community of nations but a community of values. The Greek presidency of the European Union, which begins in January 2003, will promote the values of democracy and peace in every element of its agenda. We want to focus our efforts on reinforcing the trans-Atlantic relationship. We believe that the United States and the European Union share the same democratic values. We must stand united in our efforts to promote peace within a multilateral framework.

We also will pay tribute to the cultural diversity that is at the heart of the European project, with a focus on reinvigorating democratic governance by renewing our efforts to build social inclusiveness and civil participation across borders, working with our new neighbours, from the Baltic region to the Mediterranean, from the Atlantic to the Caucasus, a new neighbourhood of peace, cooperation and democracy.

In this community of values, I should like to talk about a case in point. A few years ago, the notion of rapprochement between Greece and Turkey was unthinkable. Now, with a common European vision, our Governments are creating a framework to solve existing problems, and citizen's diplomacy is building a bridge of peace between our nations. Athens and Ankara have concluded a number of agreements in areas ranging from energy to tourism, from education to landmines, designed to ease tension and strengthen our common interests. While fundamental differences remain on certain issues, in a short space of time, we have come a long way — and we surely can go further. I welcome my discussion and meeting with the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gürel, and his willingness to continue on this path of rapprochement and peace.

Yet our shared values are being sorely tested on the issue of Cyprus. There is now a compelling deadline for a resolution to the continuing division of the island. Negotiations for the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union will be finalized in December. We hope that a free, united Cyprus will join a free, united Europe. Unification will undoubtedly bring greater security and prosperity to both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities on the island. But if a political settlement is not reached, the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus will join alone. Let us therefore work to break down the walls that keep future European Union citizens apart.

With the exception of Turkey, the whole world shares a vision for Cyprus as a federal State with a

single international personality and a single citizenship, no foreign troops on its soil, and equal rights and security guarantees for both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. The vast majority of the Cypriot population agrees that the two communities can and should live together, united by shared values, while preserving their individual cultural identities.

We must respect United Nations resolutions on Cyprus. They must be honoured, as my Maltese colleague just repeated.

Cyprus is also a critical factor for the stability and security of South-eastern Europe and the Middle East. A solution to this problem, therefore, will widen the area of stability and peace throughout the region.

Not much farther away, the situation in Iraq is a challenge for us all. It challenges our respect for international law and our respect for international organizations. Greece vows to act in the way it sees fit to safeguard these valued principles.

In dealing with Iraq, our actions must be guided by evidence of a threat to global security, and must be embedded in respect for the well-being of the Iraqi people. We must exhaust all available diplomatic means to ensure that Iraq complies with existing United Nations resolutions, immediately accepts the unconditional return of United Nations weapons inspectors and destroys all weapons of mass destruction. This will free the people of Iraq from the economic sanctions, which are depriving them of their basic needs.

We welcome the statement by President Bush. By taking the issue of Iraq back to the Security Council, he has both challenged the Council and empowered it to move forward more effectively and more credibly.

Democracy is a value that should not be taken for granted. It must be reinforced to meet new challenges in a globalizing world. In this spirit, Greece launched, in Johannesburg, the first-ever online global poll on sustainable development and the environment. Electronic democracy offers tremendous potential for bridging the digital divide that separates many peoples and individuals, for strengthening civil participation and for enhancing global democratic legitimacy and transparency. We suggest that the United Nations establish a new global forum — an electronic Demos — where citizens could articulate their views, mobilize around the issues that concern them and shape political decision-making, both nationally and internationally.

Greece will make good on its commitment to sustainable development by taking concrete actions and identifying specific targets.

This year, many countries celebrated the establishment of an institution that was founded on the premise that good global governance must be built on sound global principles. The International Criminal Court represents a commitment by our community of nations that no crime against humanity will go unpunished. Creating a watertight system of global justice which requires all countries to uphold common rules, principles and rights will be an important step towards building a real community of global values.

Finally, I would like to say that those values lie at the heart of the Olympic Truce, which was endorsed by the Millennium Summit and the Millennium Declaration. It is global peace initiative which was just recently endorsed by the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. When he signed the Olympic Truce in June, President Mandela said:

> "The Olympic Games represent one of the most evocative moments of celebration of our unity as human beings in pursuit of noble ideas. Among those ideas is the quest for global peace."

We uphold the values of democracy, human rights, peace and sustainable development; they can enrich us all. They can inspire us and challenge us. They are values that can inspire change in one person, in one community or in a large nation. They are values that can change the life of not just one person, but the world as a whole. These are the values upon which we must build our future and the future of our children.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kamal Kharrazi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Farsi; English text furnished by the delegation*): I would like at the outset to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and to assure him of the full support and cooperation of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran as he embarks on his crucial task. I would also like to express my appreciation to the President of Assembly at its fifty-

sixth session for his skilful leadership. I would also like to welcome Switzerland to the United Nations, and look forward also to welcoming the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his strong and compassionate leadership and for the vision and wisdom that he expressed in his statement before the Assembly.

The world today is characterized by great diversity and emerging factors with a far-reaching influence. In the light of advances in information technology and of the new international information order, current issues and problems are interrelated, like the parts of an organism, and truly global. More than ever before, we see that nations and States are seeking to expand their options and ascertain the nature and the extent of their contribution to, and participation in, global affairs on the basis of not only their national security and interests but also their regional responsibilities, as well as international requirements and norms. This trend towards the achievement of such fundamental objectives points to the expansion of a global, democratic and participatory process that will endure in the long term and is thus sustainable.

Embracing diversity, questioning and critically reviewing the past and seeking democratic participation and action all teach us that the fundamental universal human values of peace and security, freedom and independence, and justice and fairness must become the very centre of global attention. Without continued, active cooperation to draw our world closer to such fundamental values, we will not successfully meet the current global challenges. Without expanding the scope of peace and security, neither freedom nor independence will be achievable; without justice and fairness, neither peace nor security will become accessible; and without freedom and independence, both peace and security will become impossible to attain. It is only through such an approach that we will be able to work together, think together and cooperate in a multilateral framework so as to find answers to challenges we face in common and to deal with regional crises.

The world is facing grave challenges today, particularly in the aftermath of the tragic terror attacks of 11 September 2001. Chief among these challenges are terrorism and other forms of violence. Combating the sinister phenomenon of terrorism is an urgent and unavoidable imperative. A genuine and effective fight against terrorism must include, on the one hand, an attempt to identify the root causes of terrorism and, on the other, a concerted effort by the international community to address them. It goes without saying that the perpetrators of acts of terrorism must be brought to justice and given their just deserts. Calling for the root causes of terrorism to be addressed should in no way be construed as an attempt to justify terrorism or detract from the gravity of terrorist acts or from the severity of the punishments that terrorists deserve. It is intended to pinpoint an effective and comprehensive means of eliminating terrorism.

In this context, it appears that exploring problems such as the worldwide increase in injustice and discrimination, the marginalization of a large number of people and occupation and the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of others, extremism, fanaticism, bigotry, poverty and underdevelopment could prove helpful in identifying the root causes of terrorism.

In our opinion, a wise and principled approach to fighting terrorism would entail full international cooperation, expressed at the highest political level in a world summit that would seek, inter alia, to develop an inclusive definition of terrorism that is generally acceptable.

In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General immediately after the disastrous attacks of 11 September, President Khatami called for such a world summit to address this crucial issue and to encourage international cooperation to fight terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations.

There should be a worldwide campaign against all forms and manifestations of terrorism and their perpetrators, irrespective of the identity of the victims or the objectives. Distinction must also be made between acts of terrorism and the legitimate struggle of peoples under foreign occupation or aggression, in accordance with international law. Any campaign bent on relating the inhuman phenomenon of terrorism to divine religions that have always been the harbingers of peace, love, amity and moral decency is a great and unforgivable transgression against those religions and their countless followers.

As a victim of the most brutal acts of terrorism, the Islamic Republic of Iran regards fighting terrorism in a genuine and comprehensive way as a top national

priority, and it is thus in the forefront of the international coalition against terrorism. To help promote regional and international peace and security, my country has thus far signed bilateral agreements or is in the process of finalizing such agreements with more than 20 countries on the extradition of offenders and on the provision of legal assistance for promoting cooperation in the areas of fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and other organized crimes, of the extradition of criminals and of mutual legal assistance. We are intent on further strengthening this policy of enhanced cooperation. In that context, and in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1390 (2002), the Islamic Republic of Iran has reported to the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee regarding its counter-terrorism efforts in general and about the measures it has adopted against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in particular.

We are greatly concerned by the current trend of international disarmament negotiations, which is leading to the further vulnerability and fragility of international security. Rejection of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by a permanent member of the Security Council and the holder of the largest nuclear arsenal, and the withdrawal of that member from negotiations on the CTBT on-site inspection operational manual, point to that State's policy of unilateralism. Further signs of such a policy are its withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, its blocking of the negotiations on a protocol strengthening the implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention and its going against the judgement of the international community with respect to the regulation of the trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons.

It is only by developing a broader view of multilateralism, international cooperation and respect for the rule of law that we can guarantee progress and success in the field of disarmament and international security issues. Expansion of and deeper respect for human rights throughout the world are a function of their universality and indivisibility, on the one hand, and of the recognition of national and regional particularities and cultural backgrounds, on the other.

Rejecting the use of human rights for political purposes, rejecting double standards and discriminatory approaches, and promoting international cooperation in that field for the sake of human rights will definitely help promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Such an approach prevailed at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights, and my country thus received a favourable decision. We are pleased that, with the cooperation of other States, our draft resolutions on developing international cooperation in the field of human rights and on promoting cultural diversity were adopted.

Globalization will yield fruitful results when it is accompanied by a non-selective and non-discriminatory approach: when it provides equal opportunities for all within the framework of a global partnership. If the developed countries fail to fulfil their responsibilities, globalization can hardly be called a success story. An open, equitable, law-based, transparent and non-discriminatory international trading system is a prerequisite for achieving the goals of economic growth and sustainable development in developing countries.

The continued brutalities in occupied Palestine once again indicate that solutions not well grounded in justice and realism will fail to bring about lasting peace in the Middle East region. The Palestinian people have the right, under international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to persist in their struggle to restore their inalienable rights. Occupying other people's land must be condemned, as must labelling as terrorist a nation that is only fighting to liberate its homeland.

The way to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East is to guarantee to Palestinians the right to return to their homeland and the right to self-determination, leading to the formation — in a democratic process and under the supervision of the United Nations — of a Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. It is the Palestinian people's legitimate right to choose, through democratic means, their future political system and the manner in which they elect to establish their civil and political order. We respect the choices that the Palestinian people make.

The long-standing policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Afghanistan has been the rejection of violence, the promotion of intra-Afghan dialogue and the establishment of a representative Government by democratic means. We are pleased that, as a result of international efforts — particularly by the United Nations — civil order is gradually being consolidated by the Afghan people themselves through the

establishment of the Interim Administration, the Emergency Loya Jirga and the Transitional Government. Formulating Afghanistan's Constitution on the basis of democratic principles, Afghan culture and tradition, taking into account the views of all ethnic groups, will be a major step in consolidating law and order, in strengthening the political structure and in achieving peace, security and stability in Afghanistan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is continuing its close cooperation with the Transitional Government of Afghanistan, especially in the context of spending the $50 million in assistance earmarked for small-scale reconstruction projects in Afghanistan during the Iranian fiscal year 1381, which began on 21 March 2002. Joint efforts that are moving forward include providing custom facilities and preferential arrangements in customs, transit, trade and scientific, cultural and educational cooperation, combating drug trafficking and terrorism, and helping Afghan refugees to return to Afghanistan. The international community is expected to make good on its pledges to Afghanistan so as to begin to rebuild the economic infrastructure there and to create conditions conducive to the voluntary return of Afghan refugees to their homeland. Greater attention and resources must be invested — particularly by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme — in crop substitution programmes in Afghanistan as an effective strategy to fight narcotics trafficking.

Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and compliance by Iraq with relevant Security Council resolutions — particularly those concerning the return of the weapons inspectors to Iraq — followed by the lifting of international sanctions in the interest of the oppressed people of Iraq, constitute the overall policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Iraq. We oppose any unilateral measures or military intervention in Iraq, we underline the central role of the United Nations in that regard, and we hold that it is up to the people of Iraq to determine their own future through democratic means.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is following the situation between its two neighbours, Pakistan and India, with much concern. As a neighbour, we wish to stress the age-old wisdom of the subcontinent and to impress upon the leadership in both countries the importance of exercising self-restraint in both word and deed and of keeping open the lines of communication and dialogue with a view to resolving the situation in accordance with the rules and principles of international law and in the interests of both nations.

The current global trend towards participation in collective efforts to face major international challenges and resolve regional crises through democratic means has raised a glimmer of hope for our world today. No doubt, dialogue among civilizations has a special place in charting the way and promoting understanding and tolerance in these troubled times. Dialogue, as a multifaceted and long-term process, teaches us to grow out of the politics of domination that have created so much agony and violence and gradually to opt for the politics of interaction, tolerance and communication. In this context, the United Nations, as a centre of dialogue, international decision-making and implementation, will increasingly gain in importance as the international community resolves to strengthen international peace, security and development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, His Excellency Mr. João Bernardo de Miranda.

Mr. Miranda (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese, English text provided by the* delegation): Allow me, on behalf of my Government and in my own name, to salute Mr. Kavan on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. We are convinced that his knowledge and diplomatic experience will guide us to success in our activities.

As the international situation remains caught in the throes of instability, insecurity, economic backwardness and the scourge of pandemics and hunger, we nevertheless note with pleasure the great progress that has been made since our last session. After decades of conflict, peace was finally restored throughout southern Africa and is now slowly becoming a reality in other regions. The people of East Timor were finally able to assert their self-determination and independence. Countries such as Angola, which have actively advocated the legitimate rights and interests of East Timor at the United Nations, take great pleasure in welcoming that new sister republic to the family of this world Organization.

Important advances were also made by the international community in the struggle against terrorism. Thanks to a global and coordinated effort, major terrorist networks have been dismembered. Angola reiterates its strong condemnation of terrorist acts, such as that perpetrated against the American

people in September last year. Angola continues to be committed to the strict implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). We support stronger control measures, particularly in the financial area, so as increasingly to curb the scope of action of terrorist groups.

All these advances underscore the fact that, in spite of their complexity, the serious problems that afflict our world today can be resolved. No country or region should be doomed to live forever under the scourge of war and terror or be deprived of its rights. Under the auspices of the United Nations, the international community must react to crisis situations expeditiously and effectively. Experience has shown that belated and ineffectual reactions lead to the escalation of protracted and intractable conflicts, especially in Africa. Fortunately, however, the individual and collective efforts of many Governments in Africa are now easing these tensions, laying the essential bases for a solid, just and lasting peace.

The current situation in Angola is a reflection of that reality. For the first time since our independence, Angola and Angolans are now enjoying a climate of authentic peace, thanks to the allaying of factors that could have provoked a resurgence of the past war and insecurity. The efforts of the Angolan Government have blazed the trail from a fratricidal war towards irreversible peace, thanks to the goodwill and profound patriotic spirit demonstrated by all Angolans. Military hostilities effectively ended seven months ago. The peace understandings reached on 4 April have been scrupulously adhered to. Armed political parties no longer exist. Today, there is just one single army, under the authority of the Angolan Government.

The peace process will soon be concluded with the completion of the political tasks still pending under the Lusaka Protocol. In Angola, the process of economic and social rehabilitation is well under way and Government institutions have begun to operate normally throughout our national territory.

Clearly, given the current situation, it will be difficult for the Angolan Government to rise appropriately to the nation's economic and social challenges. Our main challenge now lies in the reintegration into society of thousands of combat veterans, 4 million displaced persons, refugees and thousands upon thousands of handicapped, war orphans and widows.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, members of the troika of observer nations in the peace process and all those who, in various ways, have contributed to the achievement of peace in Angola and who have pledged their assistance to solve the problems caused by the recently ended war.

Now at peace, Angola is more than ever ready and willing to take up its role as a sister nation of Africa and of the world. In the coming days, it will assume the presidency of the Southern Africa Development Community, the most important regional organization for the economic integration of southern Africa. Angola is also a candidate for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council in the elections scheduled for this session of the General Assembly. In these bodies, Angola intends to contribute actively towards an environment of stability, fostering the development and economic welfare of our peoples. Of central concern to Angola is the issue of peace in Central Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Only over time will it be possible to avert the widespread destabilization of the region.

Angola has been a factor of stability in Central Africa, having contributed substantially to the cessation of the wave of violence and to the relative peace now enjoyed by the population in the area.

In the context of these efforts, and under Angola's aegis, the Presidents of the DRC and Uganda signed an agreement in Luanda on 6 September. This was seen as a crucial step for the complete settlement of the Congolese conflict and for the establishment of good neighbourly relations between the two countries.

Angola welcomes the diplomatic initiatives undertaken by other countries to resolve the conflict, whether or not they are involved in the conflict, under the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the understandings reached by the Congolese parties themselves. Angola advocates a new regional order of peace, security, cooperation and development, to be based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, democratic values and respect for human rights. We are willing to work together with other central and southern African countries and to offer them our good offices.

The instability in some parts of the world requires a greater measure of commitment by the United

Nations and the parties concerned for peace and security. Special attention should continue to be focused on the settlement of the Somali conflict, fostering unification of the country and consolidation of lasting peace there. In Western Sahara, we are concerned at delays in the process towards a referendum by those resident in the territory. Angola urges the parties involved to show flexibility and to continue cooperating with the United Nations and the African Union towards a negotiated settlement.

In the Middle East, renewed escalation of the violence may hamper current initiatives towards a peaceful settlement of the Palestine issue and the termination of Arab-Israeli crisis. We urge the parties to return to the negotiating table and to find a political settlement that will serve the best interests of all peoples living in the region and meet their security requirements.

Last July, the African States established the African Union as a more effective tool to help in the resolution of innumerable problems that are at the root of underdevelopment, such as poverty, foreign debt, lack of know-how and epidemics, among others. Our priority is to end the current economic stagnation in Africa. The establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development reflects the determination of African Governments to resolve the problems of economic backwardness, poverty and social exclusion that afflict the majority of their peoples and the continuing marginalization of Africa from international markets in terms of capital, services and goods. Angola hopes that the international community, especially donor nations, will lend Africa a helping hand by increasing official development assistance on the basis of fair and non-discriminatory criteria.

In closing, allow me to offer my hearty congratulations to Switzerland as it joins our family of members of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Juli Minoves-Triquell, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Andorra.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan*): First of all, may I congratulate President Jan Kavan, well known for his expertise in human rights, on his election to preside over this General Assembly. My congratulations also go to the outgoing President, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his hard work, and I commend the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, whose stewardship of the Organization in these trying times is particularly admirable. I also congratulate Switzerland on its admission to membership in the Organization.

The President returned to the Chair.

This session of the General Assembly, more than in recent years, seems caught between the past and the future — a tragic past, an uncertain future. In New York, and in the world, the catastrophe of the attacks of 11 September seems so present with us that we feel its imprint still upon us, as if our souls were marked by the fall of the towers and the cruel loss of life. We feel this past as a tangible, palpable weight, and we also sense the future pressing in upon us.

This past year, we have witnessed the war in Afghanistan, the fall of the Taliban and the establishment of a new Government in Kabul. Will there be intervention in Iraq, will there be more attacks in America, in Europe, or elsewhere? What will the future bring?

I ask these questions as Foreign Minister of the Principality of Andorra. Andorra is a small and peaceful country nestled in the protected valleys of the Pyrenees. We have lived in peace for nearly a thousand years. And yet we are not safe from the storms that buffet the world. Because of our small size, our reliance on trade and our relations with our neighbours and the world — our diplomacy, if you will — are of the greatest importance to our well-being. As we turn to the world, so, too, the world turns to us in the tens of millions of tourists that visit us every year.

Our industries, our citizens and our lives are as intimately linked to the world as to the mountains that surround us. This link was clear in the profound sadness of our people over the loss of life in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. We felt it as a visceral blow, a spontaneous expression of true sympathy.

The world surrounds us, although we often feel we can do little to influence the course of events. And yet what we do know is how actively to seek peace, and thereby ensure our future. It is about the future, the idea of the future, that I wish to speak today.

The future. In order to understand it, we must look not only to those events that are determining it, that are forming it even as we speak, but also to its own history as an idea. What is the history of the future?

Here I will only invoke, in passing, two earlier models that 500 years ago embodied our understanding of the future: God's providence and the wheel of Fortune. In the providential model of the future, God looks down on the full history of the world from "the high citadel of eternity" in the words of Thomas Aquinas. He sees everything, every grain of sand, every sparrow that falls. "There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow" Hamlet tells Laertes in Shakespeare's great play. But alongside this Christian understanding of God's providence is another figure, the pagan figure of Fortuna, who holds her wheel on which all men, king and commoner, rise and fall. Hamlet is also aware of her power; he is buffeted by the slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune, and he longs to end his life, but he fears God's prohibition against suicide. This very prohibition, shared by all three of the great religions of the West, was broken by the suicide attacks of 11 September. So, too, the prohibition that "thou shall not kill". Life is precious: it is given to us, and we cannot take it away.

In these two models of the future, humanity is passive. We are puppets — God or Fortune pulls our strings. But gradually we drew away from this passive enslavement to our fate, our destiny, and we struggled to master the future. The change in the future is first heard in the writings of that first theorist of diplomacy, the cunning Machiavelli. In *The Prince*, he wrote that a ruler must learn to profit from chance, or rather turn chance to his favour. In a typically violent metaphor, he tells the Prince that Fortune must be beaten. Machiavelli counsels him to wrestle with fortune and thereby create the future.

Although Machiavelli was advising an absolute monarch, and indeed his thought presaged a long period of monarchical absolutism, he understood that the rulers and the administrators could no longer afford to be passive objects of history. They had to consider, to think, to attack fortune; to hurl the slings and shoot the arrows back at her, if you will. In this shift, from passive object to active agent, the idea of the future begins its transformation. In this future, Machievelli's heirs — diplomats gathered here today — advise the modern princes, the democratically elected rulers of the world, for the general good of the people.

The future becomes an idea that we build through strategy, thought and action, through laws and treaties we enter into and must obey. That is the very purpose of the United Nations, the great parliament of the world's Governments, or in a less poetic but more apt image, a great, international factory, in that it builds the future: a future, not for the wealthy or the powerful, not for some nations, but for the world and its peoples.

Out of the ruins of the Second World War, the nations of the world joined to create a better future for all humanity. The belief that binds us together is the belief that together, only together, we can build a better world for all: a glorious city on the hill; a new Jerusalem; a Jerusalem of all religions, all beliefs; a city of tolerance; a city very much like New York.

That is why, I think, the terrorist attacks were so painful, for New York City is very much an expression of the United Nations, a place for all of the citizens of the world, all religions and all beliefs — the city of tolerance; a city that resolutely looks forward to the future; New York: city of dreams, city of the future.

Strangely, even as New York was profoundly wounded by these attacks, no other city, I think, has been so resolute in looking forward. The city was not, nor is it, spoiled by revenge. New York always looks to the future. While others may reproach the city for its indifference to its past, its forward-looking optimism is perhaps its greatest gift to the world.

So when we all saw in Andorra and elsewhere the attacks on the World Trade Center, my first response was that the suicide hijackers did not know New York. They did not know that this city has brought people from all countries together. They did not know the people who would die in the collapse of the towers: people from many of the religions and countries of the world.

But then I realized that perhaps they did know, that perhaps New York was their target, and that their target was the future. Or rather, their target was a future of tolerance: religious, cultural, personal. Indeed, it seems that the terrorists longed for purity, for a pure vision of the future in which the tolerance — the impurities — of New York would have no place.

They believed, but not in the uncertain future of New York, the restless striving for the new. They believed that with their deaths they would enter paradise of the afterlife. They believed, sacrilegiously, that they were the means of God's providence.

When the terrorists attacked America, they also attacked the future. They attacked the future of tolerance, a future controlled not by fate, but by

mankind. We cannot let our notion of the future fall with the towers, for the future is as fragile as the towers proved to be, perhaps more so. The future is built not of steel and stone, but of law and human sympathy.

In a way, I think, at least for the moment and perhaps necessarily, the terrorist attack on the future has damaged it. It demanded a strong response: the mission in Afghanistan, the continued destruction of Al Qaeda. That is the kind of response that the perpetrators of that violence would understand; a response that cannot be seen as a sign of weakness or vulnerability. It is a logical, and therefore necessary, response that the terrorists themselves unleashed.

But violence breeds violence, and the future of violence is simple destruction: nothing — and nothing will come of nothing. We run the risk of entering an endless war against a shadowy enemy; a war that, given the nature of the enemy, might prove very hard to win completely. And yet it must be won.

Our first and strongest line of defence against violence is the rule of law, with diplomacy to enact it. The United States, founded on the rule of law and on rights for all, understands that. Andorra understands that, because without law we would not have survived as a country for nearly a millennium.

That is why Andorra believes in and supports international law and trusts the United Nations, particularly its democratic members, to lead the world from its history of violence towards its common future. In relation to Iraq, Andorra supports the role of the United Nations, and we shall follow carefully the debates in the Security Council.

Terrorism is not a conventional war: there can be no treaties, no compacts, with terrorists. Law is vital for all countries, but terrorists do not care about laws. They are without a country and pose a particular danger and challenge. In that sense, we must embark on an aggressive reaching out to all people, an aggressive assertion of our common humanity. That might well be a media campaign, although it needs to come directly from all elected politicians and ministers. We are not trying to abstract issues or win a war of words. We need to pull everybody into the human compact. We need to recognize our individual vulnerability.

It was America's belief in its invulnerability that was so profoundly shaken by the terrorist attack. Yet if the sudden collapse of the towers and the fear and chaos of that day revealed a weakness, it also revealed strength: the strength of its citizens' resolve and the profound sympathy of all the peoples of the world.

In the wake of 11 September we recognize both the need for the rule of law and the cause of that need: the vulnerability of all people to malevolent attack. The motto of Andorra is *Virtus Unita Fortior*, which can be loosely translated as "United We Stand". That is not simply an appeal to patriotism or for a common front against the enemy. It is a recognition that together people are stronger, because alone we are weak and vulnerable.

Nothing can justify the attack of 11 September 2001. It is nevertheless important, here in the General Assembly, to consider the roots of violence. The terrorists turned their anger and alienation — political, cultural, economic and personal — into an abstract act of inhuman cruelty whose "solution" was the attack on the towers. Only in the cold world of abstraction does that attack symbolize anything beyond untold suffering. We need to pull violence back from abstraction into the world of human conversation.

If people feel excluded from the future, their alienation gives them a mad and violent certainty. We must get to work to rebuild an inclusive and tolerant idea of the future, an idea that is all too easily forgotten in war, an idea of the future in which everybody is protected from those who would destroy it, an idea of the future so strong that it includes those people who might otherwise be tempted by the madness of playing God.

That future is premised on awareness, not of the strength of the nuclear nations or of powerful economies, but of the vulnerability of this compact and of individual nations large and small. We must recognize the power of our vulnerability, for in this recognition, we recover our strength, our vision of a common future and the will to act together. It is together that we will win the war against terrorism.

The President: I now call on His Excellency the Honourable Timothy Harris, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Education of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Harris (Saint Kitts and Nevis): Allow me first to salute fellow leaders, whose tireless work and

timeless commitment within and beyond the halls of the United Nations help shape a more secure world for our peoples. Improving the human condition is a charge to which we must remain resolutely committed. This we can achieve only through meaningful partnership.

Last year's efforts and the promise of community-building should not be excluded from this year's agenda. To build community partnership is crucial; but, more importantly, we need equity. To fulfil expectations of a better world, and to extract the lauded benefits of globalization, much harder work is required to reduce the gap between rich and poor nations and the haves and have-nots in our societies.

How can we explain the excruciating truths of a global marketplace where countries which are technologically deficient and heavily dependent on agriculture for their survival are encouraged, and even coerced, into opening their economies and embracing free trade, while larger and richer economies systematically subsidize their domestic agricultural output, mostly for political reasons, at a rate of between 22 to 60 percent annually.

Mr. President, your mandate this year — a very critical one — will be to ensure that the peoples of the world who suffer as a result of this inequity can truly renew their faith in us and believe again in the values of the United Nations.

My delegation has said repeatedly that globalization is not a bad thing. However, it continues to be managed badly. We insist that the current structure of the global economy is inherently flawed. It serves to reward the powerful and to punish the weak. While we appreciate that our world is undergoing profound and necessary changes, we cannot countenance abandoning the principles and values that bind us within the human family and the family of nations.

Globalization, in our view, must include true universal equity in its application of shared responsibility and good governance. The selective processes by which the agendas of the powerful few are advanced to the exclusion of the small, poor and economically vulnerable States must be addressed with a willingness to correct it. My delegation believes that the United Nations is uniquely positioned to respond to this challenge. Hence, my Government questions attempts to transform certain United Nations organs such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) into advisory bodies, and away from development assistance, which poor developing countries need now more than ever.

The United Nations must evolve as a dynamic, receptive and representative body to stem the tides that threaten us. It must build or strengthen social safety nets in many developing nations, not oversee processes geared at dismantling them. We must recommit to improving lives and to re-energizing our fight against poverty, hunger and ignorance. The United Nations has a significant role to play in this endeavour. Improved coordination of United Nations agencies is critical in achieving these objectives.

My delegation urges Member States to pledge their support, and hopes that they will, to ensure that the three conferences sponsored by the United Nations this year — the International Conference on Financing for Development, the special session on children and the World Summit on Sustainable Development — bear fruit. We remain hopeful that continued dialogue, partnership and the instrumentality of the United Nations will enable us to make meaningful progress.

A year has passed since the barbaric acts of 11 September. The foundations of our world views have changed dramatically, as has the way we look at ourselves and at our commitment to personal, national and international security. Again, Saint Kitts and Nevis unreservedly denounces any act of terrorism, anywhere in the world. We do not believe that the indiscriminate killing of innocent people as an expression of despair or oppression is an acceptable means of redress. We value highly the sanctity of life, and my Government is committed to its protection. We will work together in the United Nations to find international solutions to address this outrage. Let us ensure that the continuing war against terrorism is waged within the structures of international institutions such as the United Nations.

Year after year, we call on the international community to join our noble campaign to halt the trans-shipment of nuclear wastes through our Caribbean region, but this call goes unheeded. I reiterate our appeal today. Saint Kitts and Nevis urges sustained follow-up action to give meaning and life to the United Nations resolution adopted in 2000 declaring the Caribbean Sea a special area in the context of sustainable development.

Representation is crucial to the peoples of the world, and, as my delegation has done in the past, I wish to re-emphasize the status of the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan. Membership in this Organization is in itself a validation and celebration of a people's fundamental human rights. We therefore lament the continued stalemate that results in the exclusion of the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan from the United Nations family.

The contribution of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to the global market, to the international community in the areas of technology, technical assistance and development assistance is unmistakably significant. Its participation in international activities can rival, and in many instances surpasses, that of many developed countries who are full Members of the United Nations. It is unfortunate and most regrettable, therefore, that the United Nations has been unable to create a meaningful and practical formula that would allow the Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits to resolve this impasse, which stymies the genuine hopes and desires of millions of people who adhere to the principles of the United Nations Charter and whose nation is a model international citizen.

We have witnessed how involvement by the international community can facilitate positive developments, such as the emergence of nationhood. On behalf of my Government and in my own name, I welcome East Timor to the United Nations family. I salute it and its great leaders and pledge my Government's support in working with it in the years ahead on issues of mutual interest and, of course, of interest to the international fraternity of nations. I also extend a hand of welcome and friendship to the Government and the people of Switzerland. It has observed the United Nations for many years, so it is no stranger to its proceedings. The Organization will benefit greatly from its participation, and Saint Kitts and Nevis looks forward to collaborating with it in the future.

The incidence of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean region is a real and growing threat to our security at a number of levels. In human terms, it threatens to devastate families and to create a generation of orphans. At the economic level, it places a tremendous burden on the health resources of our countries and has already begun to undermine the economic infrastructure of our countries. The most productive and able-bodied are at risk, and those infected with the disease are less and less able to contribute to the economic activity and growth of their countries. Instead, they require medical and financial support. Resources earmarked for other areas have to be redeployed to address the new pandemic.

It is clear that pharmaceutical companies and Governments that support them can do much more to reduce the cost of antiretroviral drugs. Private-sector companies must also do more to assist employees and families suffering from HIV/AIDS. It is regrettable that the $10 billion in resources required by the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria are yet to be realized.

Saint Kitts and Nevis repeats its call for new paradigms to redress the inequities of globalization. We urge the international community to develop appropriate frameworks to promote fundamental freedoms as a comprehensive whole, not only in terms of political rights, such as the right to self-expression and the right to vote, but also the human right to economic development. Only when we respond to the genuine needs of humankind — only when the hungry are fed, the vulnerable made strong, the weak, dispossessed, disenfranchised and oppressed empowered and made to feel a sense of belonging, and when they are free to participate fully in issues relating to their future — can we have a world where anarchy, terrorism, inter-State conflicts and war recede.

What we ask for is certainly attainable. We simply call on the United Nations to facilitate systems where partnership, collective responsibility and respect for each other are allowed to flourish. This is possible once States realize that national policies in a global economy have international consequences. Politics may still be local, but when we take action locally we must remember that we are also global citizens. Thus, a principal goal of globalization should be to level the playing field to provide equal opportunity. Strategies, as a consequence, should reflect confidence-building measures for free trade and sustainable development.

In conclusion, let me say that the United Nations has stood firm for peace, prosperity and security for all peoples. It has done much to ensure peace and justice throughout the world, consistent with the principles of international law. It has set itself lofty goals for this millennium: basic education for all, eradicating poverty, reducing HIV/AIDS, and ensuring sustainable

development for all. Our people and, indeed, all citizens of the global community pray that the political will will be found to translate those lofty goals into reality on the ground. Positive action, rather than eloquent speech, must become the defining quality of the United Nations in the third millennium.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Frederick A. Mitchell, M.P., Minister for Foreign Affairs and Public Service of the Bahamas.

Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas): On behalf of Prime Minister Perry G. Christie, the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, I congratulate you most warmly, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. The Bahamas is confident that this session will be steered to a fruitful conclusion under your able guidance. You and the other members of your equally competent Bureau may be assured of the full support of the Bahamas in the performance of your duties. I take this opportunity also to congratulate your predecessor from the Republic of Korea for his skilful leadership during the fifty-sixth session.

The right to self-determination and the full, fair and unhindered expression of the will of the people are principles held in the highest esteem by the Bahamas. The Bahamas looks forward to welcoming the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the United Nations when it takes its place in the Assembly in just a few weeks. The Bahamas is also pleased to welcome Switzerland to this family of nations.

The world has agreed that the United Nations is a place where nations large and small are equal, where disputes of an international character may be resolved peacefully, and where the use of force is supported only in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The Bahamas and all other nations represented here have signed on to this contract, a contract that, in our view, is inviolate and must be honoured. This should not be a matter of convenience and, in our view, applies to all nations, large and small. Today, I reaffirm the commitment of the Bahamas to the United Nations Charter and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Government and the people of the Bahamas believe in the United Nations, and will continue to support it and to uphold the founding principles on which its effectiveness and success depends.

We reaffirm our commitment to the rule of law, and an abiding respect for the right to self-determination, the sovereignty of nations and the right of people everywhere to expect that their Government, freely and democratically elected, will protect their rights. We urge world leaders to accept that the freely expressed will of the people is their sole claim to legitimacy and that the will of the people should not be subverted by any means. We reject parochialism as a justification for obfuscating the true intent and will of a people as expressed through the ballot box.

The Government of the Bahamas believes in good governance at all levels as a fundamental human right. As an adjunct to that right, we have committed ourselves to deepening our long-standing democratic tradition. General elections are not the end of the story. The citizen must continue to have a role in the governance of the country. Civil society must be actively encouraged to develop and engage in the affairs of the country. The Bahamas is committed to consulting its people on all matters of national importance. This becomes critical as our country examines its role and fulfils its obligations to other Member States on the bilateral and multilateral levels.

The first anniversary of the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon, near Washington, D.C., and the tragedy in Pennsylvania, were commemorated just a few days ago. On that occasion, the Bahamas reiterated its condemnation of those acts as attacks on our values and on our civilization. Such acts must not go unpunished. We therefore support measures to bring the guilty to justice and to prevent similar attacks in all their forms and manifestations. We are resolute in our views on this. We pause to remember the families and friends in countries around the world who lost loved ones in those attacks.

In our own country we are seeking to recover from the knock-on effects of the unemployment the attacks caused. We are taking steps to rebuild our economy. We have initiated changes to our domestic law and we have, in the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the Organization of American States, become parties to international conventions to bolster our capacity to play our necessary role in the fight against these attacks on our way of life. We will continue to give our full support to international efforts to eliminate this scourge. At the same time, we are

keen to ensure that in this fight the fundamental rights and freedoms of our citizens are not eroded.

The Bahamas believes that there is no better legacy that we can leave to the generations to come than an Earth that is safe and secure and that can sustain life. We firmly believe that there can be development without harm to the environment. We emphasized that point at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The environment is not only the biological medium that supports the life of the people of the Bahamas, but it is also the central reason for our economic success. The Government has therefore given high priority to preserving and protecting the environment, and has taken practical steps to do so.

We reiterate our concern expressed at the Summit about the threat posed to small island developing States by all manifestations of climate change, including the rise in sea levels. We have repeatedly expressed our grave concern to some of our industrialized partners about the trans-shipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean and about the disastrous effects it might have on the economies of the Bahamas and the Caribbean. Tourism is our primary industry. An accident involving spent nuclear fuel will almost certainly destroy it. We do not accept that, because the risk of accidents is remote, the transhipment of nuclear waste should be allowed to continue. We make the assertion today and ask for the transhipment to cease.

The Bahamas joins in urging the early ratification and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and in reaffirming its commitment to sustainable development and to the Political Declaration and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The international community faces a broad range of political, economic, social and cultural issues. We have made inroads, but not sufficient to stem the spiral of persistence of poverty, hunger, human rights abuses, crime and diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, or to address the vulnerability of small island developing States. The Bahamas is particularly concerned about HIV/AIDS and the slow progress in fighting the disease.

The critical question on HIV/AIDS and all the other issues is: Where do we go from here? This body has made important commitments to the world. There are reviews, platforms and programmes of action. Our respective publics may be forgiven for their cynicism and the criticism levelled that the United Nations is a talking shop. Our view, however, is that it is better to talk than fight. Talking is, in fact, a form of action and there is no doubt that, with regard to HIVAIDS, discussion of the problem is central to the solutions. But our respective publics are looking for and require more immediate money and direct action. We must not be accused of inaction in the face of human suffering and adversity.

We in the Bahamas have ably demonstrated our determination to play our part in these endeavours. We have been credited regionally and internationally for our model programmes, particularly in respect to our treatment of and efforts to control the spread of HIV/AIDS. We especially wish to thank the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization, now celebrating its hundredth year, for the cooperation they have extended to the Bahamas and for their stellar work in the area of international health. We wish to commend the recent initiative to provide antiretroviral drugs to countries of the Caribbean to assist in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The Bahamas is concerned about the present global economic order. We raise questions about whether globalization and trade liberalization can indeed function as vehicles for progressive change in all countries large and small, developed and developing. We are committed to adapting to change, but at a pace and in a manner and form that are consistent with the way we live. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), of which the Bahamas is a part, has taken up the challenges of ensuring a degree of stability among its member countries in the face of globalization. But the Bahamas believes that more can and must be done to assist our Caribbean Community to adapt to these externally imposed changes through equitable and sensitive trade policies and by reform of the international financial institutions and their lending practices.

The Bahamas is the unwitting transit point for illegal activities: the smuggling of human beings and the illicit trade in narcotic drugs. The United States is the ultimate target. We are also suffering from increased violent crime from guns smuggled into our country from the United States. These guns are terrorizing our society. The Bahamas is working closely with the United States and other neighbouring countries to address these issues. There must be a

stronger effective action to reduce demand for drugs in the receiving country. There must be more effective action taken to stop the flow of illegal guns.

The Bahamas has taken an active interest in the peace and stability of its sister CARICOM State, Haiti. Given our longstanding and developing relations with Haiti, positive steps taken to provide assistance and support for Haiti give us great hope. We are especially pleased with the efforts of the Inter-American Development Bank to work with the Government of Haiti to remove the existing financial hurdles that impede development efforts. We also welcome the recent Organization of American States (OAS) resolution and the announcement by the United States that it would contribute additional resources to the OAS special mission in Haiti. Illegal migration from Haiti causes a serious drain on the resources of the Bahamas. In addition to Haitian-Bahamian bilateral efforts to address this problem, the Bahamas believes that targeted international initiatives, with the cooperation of the Government of Haiti, represent the best hope for the Haitian people.

Illegal immigration from Cuba also adversely affects us. The Bahamas continues to call for the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States of America. We believe that such normalization would be central to solving that dimension of the migration problem.

The Bahamas welcomes the entry into force of the Rome Statute on 1 July 2002 and the establishment of the International Criminal Court as a critical tool in the fight against violations of humanitarian international law and crimes against humanity.

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people is a matter of concern. There should be peace between them. We support the peaceful settlement of this issue in accordance with all applicable United Nations resolutions. Every people deserves to have a State to call its own in peace and security.

The Bahamas is concerned about developments in Africa. As part of the African diaspora, we wish to see Africa prosper, wars cease and equitable policies applied for all of the many and varied people of that continent.

We support the reform of the Security Council. The Bahamas believes that the time has come for us to take the hard decisions and to agree to a practical programme of reform that takes fully into account the need for equitable membership and for a more democratic and transparent Council.

The Bahamas is a small country whose voice, without the indispensable forum provided by the United Nations, would be lost or at best ignored. Here, irrespective of size and wealth, we have the ability to speak with equal voice and to vote with equal power on matters that affect the quality of our lives today and that will impact the type of world that we leave in place for future generations. This is why it is vitally important that we preserve and respect the integrity of this Organization. Member States are bound to come here for redress and should not act unilaterally outside the bounds of the Charter. The Bahamas reaffirms its commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations as enshrined in its Charter. I leave the Assembly with that commitment here today.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.